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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the individualized education plan (IEP) mandated by Public Law 94-142 for mainstreamed handicapped students provides educators with a model for the future--when all students will have a right to an IEP. The paper first discusses the characteristics of an IEP, suggesting that it should ideally identify the child's present performance achievements, the goals to be achieved by the end of the year, how these goals will be met by classroom activities, and how attainment will be evaluated. It then asserts that since the IEP model is the oral-based conference, speech communication teachers have several advantages, and the high school speech class is a natural class for mainstreaming. The paper provides a list of guidelines for working with mainstreamed learning disabled students who have difficulties with attention span, hyperactivity, and related organizational problems. It concludes with a list of four basic teacher competencies: (1) the ability to plan an IEP for each student, (2) the ability to prepare a task analysis for each goal, (3) the ability to communicate in appropriate ways with a diverse group of students, and (4) the ability to apply a variety of teaching/learning strategies. (FL)

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TEACHING COMPETENCIES FOR MAINSTREAMED STUDENTS: A Format for the Next Fifty Years

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With the passage of Public Law 94-142, education made a major shift in direction from planning for the class to planning for the individual child. Most people herald the law because of its concern for the "least restrictive environment" for the handicapped child. The "mainstreaming law," as it is frequently labeled, made history with its requirements that each handicapped child have the right for an IEP. This Individualized Education Plan provides us with a model for the future--the next 50 years when all students, and not just handicapped ones, will have the right to an Individualized Education Plan.

Since the IEP is required for handicapped students each year, the teacher needs as a competency the ability to plan an education program for one child in a face-to-face meeting with the parent and a special education teacher or representative of the school. The IEP needs to identify 1) the child's present performance achievements, 2) goals to be achieved by the end of the year, 3) statements on how these goals will be met by the classroom activities, and 4) how attainment of the educational objectives will be evaluated.

Is this expectation essentially any different from what is expected for classroom achievement and/or planning that is urged in our current speech communication methods textbooks? A difference, but not an essential difference, exists. Two concepts, both similar to current practice, mark the components of the proposed teacher competency.

The 94-142 IEP difference exists in the plan being done for the individual rather than just the class lesson plans and by involving the parent(s) rather than just the teacher/school district. By adding the concept of "individualized" and "parent conference" to the planning competency already expected

the emerging competency for the next 50 years is highly communication-oriented. Already the U.S. Department of Education urges parents to seek out a "Personalized Education Plan," which reflects the very same elements as an IEP, as one of several ways to "help your children learn better at school" (1980, p. iii).

Since the IEP model is an oral-based conference, Friedman (1981) argues that communication-oriented teachers have two advantages: 1) they can facilitate the decision-making process of this small group problem-solving situation, and 2) they can propose more oral-based activities for achieving curricular goals. Thus, the small group discussion class of most speech communication curriculums is an important part of preparation for this competency. Also, the student teacher candidate by participation in individual events experiences a situation of strength in one type of activity that may not be a strength in another. Such preparation for diversity adaptation is an important part of individualizing any plan.

Another advantage speech communication students have in this individualizing stems from the experience of critiquing individual performances from a single critique form. The speech teacher, having used a multi-factor form to rate individual differences, gains experience in goal evaluation. From the form the student's progress is evaluated with a measured way of projecting future goals. This skill is an essential part of the IEP process.

A second major competency stemming from the mainstreaming concept is the ability to complete a task analysis for each major goal. Since mainstreaming may mean for many students with learning disabilities (or other handicapping conditions) a necessity for shortening assignments or breaking them into

segments that are not so overwhelming, task analysis becomes a method that requires both content and procedure approaches. The process of task analysis requires that the student know the content well enough to distinguish among component parts so that teaching segments can be established.

In teaching public speaking one needs to know adequately the theory so that it might be broken down in some manner, for example, following the divisions of the classical canons--invention, organization, style, and delivery. Then the teacher further divides delivery into verbal and nonverbal parts. If eye contact is a segment of nonverbal delivery then behavioral goals might be established which set up the following sequence: 1) looks up to scan the audience before starting and after concluding, 2) looks at the audience three times during the speech, 3) looks at the audience for about one-fourth of the time, 4) establishes eye contact for about fifty per cent of the speech, and 5) has consistent eye contact continually during the speech. With such a sequence of behaviors goals can be stated and the student being evaluated can be involved in recording academic progress. Once the teacher has developed such goals and recording instruments for charting progress for the "mainstreamed student" most teachers will perceive its utility for all students.

A second function of these divisions is that once the teacher has established the content divisions as part of the task analysis, the goals can be easily applied, discarded, or modified for the relevant handicapping condition. If eye contact is used for the learning disability as a goal that is easily achieved, it is ignored or modified for the blind student who then has greater emphasis placed on the goal of body position in relationship to the audience. Rosenberg clarified that exceptional students require that these steps "be carefully defined in performance terms so that each pupil's

progress can be measured." (1978, p. 89).

With each condition it is important to understand the nature of the condition or impairment so that the student is challenged by an obtainable goal. Resource personnel should be a major help in providing information about the handicapping condition and techniques for making the adaptation. The key in all cases is to treat the student as "normally" or non-handicapped as possible. Such adaptation is a component of recognizing the third major competency which is to master the adaptation of effective communication to each student.

If part of any communication model is the adaptability that must occur for the speaker to adapt to the listener, then the speech communication teacher should view mainstreaming as primarily a communication task. Such a perspective allows one to reach what Morsink (1980, b) distinguishes as the difference between <u>diversity</u> and <u>deviance</u>. While diversity is a value to be prized, deviance reflects inappropriate behaviors that are to be understood but not reinforced. Diversity may come from a variety of conditions (health, race, economic status, language, cultural background). Diversity brings with it the condition of learning how to "identify" with others so that communication can be effective.

The high school speech class with its emphasis on the basic skill of communication is a natural class for mainstreaming. When Woodward advises the teacher working with learning disabled adolescents to "limit his feedback to the situation--not to the person in that situation" (1981, p. 116), she is talking about a good communication pattern one would expect a speech teacher to model. Her advice reflects the communication models and principles of

classroom communication as a basic competency. "Teacher communication with the LD adolescent should always be clear. Verbal messages should be congruent with the messages conveyed through body language" (Woodward, p. 116).

Yet the diversity which is created by the mainstreamed student creates, according to Nutter, a negative attitude in teachers who fear they lack "sufficient technical skill to provide and manage the proper instruction" (1981, p. 131). The fourth basic competency is mastery of a variety of teaching techniques. The important discovery for teachers is that most of the teaching skills they now are using are skills to be adapted to the mainstreamed child.

To demonstrate this necessity the following list is from a recommended set of "general guidelines for working with learning disabled children who have difficulties with attention span, hyperactivity, and related organizational problems:

1. Structure the learning environment and tasks for the student. Set specific standards and limits - make the rules few and simple.
2. Be consistent with everything - directions, rules, discipline, organization, etc.
3. Establish clearly stated and understood consequences for rule infractions.
4. Present directions simply and briefly.
5. Don't assign too much at once - use a step-by-step procedure, progressing one thing at a time.
6. Shorten assignments or break into segments so it is not so overwhelming - and so it is possible for the student to complete the task. Present one task at a time.

7. Allow necessary "breaks" or time out between activities.
8. Allow appropriate ways and times for the child to expend extra energy.
9. Involve the student in recording academic progress, behavior, etc.
10. Try to improve one behavior at a time.
11. Reward appropriate behavior.

(1980, Baker and Fowler)

These suggestions are part of most general methods approaches. The difference from the regular student and the mainstreamed one is a difference of degree. If the teacher has to change all of her/his procedures, then the student has probably not been properly placed in a "least restrictive environment." Warner et. al. discovered that large number of low-achieving students in regular classrooms were performing at similar ability and achievement levels as learning disabled students in special education resource rooms (1980). This finding raises questions about placement and achievement. The resource room allows more time per student, but the methods are similar.

The competency that needs stressing is that teachers must be prepared to have a wide range of skills to try. Yet this range is needed for all students. Morsink (1980, a) warns teachers that children in schools are different because families are changing rapidly, societal demands on children have increased, and the children in classrooms today represent a much more heterogeneous grouping. To survive teachers need to apply a wide range of strategies. But this demand is a change in all classrooms, whether students are mainstreamed or not.

Thus, 94-142 presents a demand for at least four basic competencies, but these competencies are potential ones for all students and not just ones for

students mainstreamed into the classroom. These competencies are:

1) The ability to plan an IEP for each student.

2) The ability to prepare a task analysis for each goal.

3) The ability to communicate in appropriate ways with a diverse group of students.

4) The ability to apply a variety of teaching/learning strategies.

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